



Focus on **Clean Car Standards**

From the Department of Ecology's Air Quality Program

The 2005 Washington State Legislature passed legislation adopting clean car standards. The Governor signed the bill into law on May 6, 2005. Washington's law states that Washington will only require clean car standards if Oregon adopts them as well. If Oregon does adopt the standards, clean cars will be required in Washington beginning in 2009.

What are clean car standards?

There are two types of auto emission standards: federal standards and the stricter clean car standards. Because the state of California was the first state to adopt the clean car standards, they are sometimes called "California car standards." The federal Clean Air Act allows states to choose which standards they will use.

Clean car standards require better pollution controls on vehicles, which means that cars meeting these standards emit less pollution. Clean car standards significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as well as smog forming emissions, from cars and trucks.

Including California, eight other states besides Washington have adopted these standards.

Why do we need stricter standards?

In Washington, motor vehicles produce more than half of the emissions of air pollutants that cause cancer, asthma, and other health problems. More than 50 percent of Washington's residents suffer from at least one medical condition that is aggravated by air pollution. In addition to the health effects, these air pollutants also damage our economy. The annual cost to Washington's economy from air pollution-related death and illness is at least \$500 million.

Motor vehicles also produce more than half of the greenhouse gas emissions in our state. Greenhouse gases cause global warming. Effects of global warming in Washington include reduced snow pack, low summer stream flows, more winter flooding, increased coastal erosion, reduced water supplies for people and agriculture, and further loss of salmon habitat.

How will clean car standards help?

Clean car standards are the most effective tool available to significantly reduce air pollution from motor vehicles. New vehicles that meet clean car standards reduce smog-forming pollutants by up to 13 percent, and toxic air pollutants by up to 19 percent. They also emit 24-32 percent fewer greenhouse gases (depending on vehicle size) than vehicles that meet federal standards.

Are "clean cars" more expensive?

Clean cars initially cost slightly more; but they put money back in car buyers' pockets by saving money on fuel costs. In 2012, vehicles meeting the standards will probably cost about \$300 more than other vehicles; and in 2016, about \$1,000 more. At current gas prices, savings in fuel costs will be about \$3,500 over the useful life of a vehicle.

Savings in fuel costs also have other economic benefits. Economists estimate that money not spent on gasoline will go into our local economy, generating about 9,000 additional jobs by 2020. An increasing market for clean cars will also help reduce manufacturing costs for the vehicles, which will eventually lower their cost to consumers.

Does this law mean we will have fewer vehicles to choose from?

No. In fact, clean car standards actually give new car buyers more choices, because they include advanced, super-low-emission vehicles that are only available in states with these standards. Clean car vehicles come in all makes and models, including SUVs, pickup trucks, and even Hummers. They are ordinary cars; their only difference is that they pollute less because they have better pollution control technology. And states with clean car standards get cars with more advanced technology, like hybrids, without the current six month to one year wait.

What about diesel vehicles?

In 2007, new federal emission standards for diesel engines take effect. This means that after 2007, diesel engines in passenger cars will meet clean car standards. So by 2009, when the clean car standards go into effect in Washington, passenger diesel and bio-diesel vehicles will be totally acceptable. (These standards do not affect heavy-duty trucks.)

If cars are cleaner, will we still need the emission testing program?

Emission testing for all vehicles will be phased out by 2020, due to improved air quality and fewer benefits from testing.

Before it ends in 2020, the Department of Ecology's (Ecology's) Emission Check Program will change as follows:

- + Starting the first year that clean car standards apply in Washington (probably 2009), new model year vehicles will not have to be emission tested. Most new vehicles registered in Washington after 2009 will meet clean car emission standards. Used vehicles that don't meet clean car standards may still be brought in from another state.
- + Emission testing can be done at more locations starting in 2012. Ecology will be able to authorize dealers and repair shops to provide emission testing for their customers. The cost of these checks at private businesses will be set by the dealer or the repair shop, not by Ecology.

For more information

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